

MULTI-ITEM HOLDER DEVICE AND SYSTEM

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

5 This invention relates to devices for displaying essentially flat, relatively lightweight photographs, cards, artwork, electronic screens, and/or decorative items.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

10 Collecting has become an ingrained part of the American culture. Some of the best known types of collectibles are playing cards and sports trading cards. Because collectibles are, naturally, often valuable, there has developed an industry offering numerous products which can protect collections in a manner that is considered at the same time both professional and inexpensive. However, the concept of “protection” within this industry is generally
15 considered synonymous with “storage.” The majority of protective means and devices that have been made available to consumers for their collections, whether expensive or inexpensive, have been designed to protect items in secured, non-readily-visible storage. The emphasis on protection has not, to the contrary, been geared towards providing for the showcasing of collectibles for easy viewing on a wall, for example, the way that posters and artwork are
20 typically displayed. Collection holders/protectors, ranging from cheap to expensive, are most commonly designed with the intention that collectible items will be stored in drawers, closets or safes. In the event that actual display of a collection is desired, a collector will usually go to a professional frame-maker and make a large financial investment in a display frame ore case.

One of the primary disadvantages of this method, apart from the obvious high cost, is that these usually custom-made display frames and cases most often only showcase a few of the choicest items in a collection. For instance, in the case of a trading card collection, only the most valuable or attractive cards are usually placed under one solid sheet of glass or protective-coated translucent plastic and these can not easily be re-arranged without taking apart the professionally made frame/case, which is characteristically not designed to be opened.

While it is true that some inexpensive card display systems do exist in the form of transparent vinyl sheets having pockets to hold cards, these have distinct disadvantages as they:

- a) entirely encase, and therefore cover, the card making viewing of the card less aesthetically pleasing;
- b) limit to a pre-determined and fixed number (usually 9, 12, or 16) the number of cards that can be inserted into the sheet pockets;
- c) are not designed to form an attractive, inter-linking display of the pockets which would permit an entire, large collection to be showcased in a professional manner;
- d) are fixed in size, which means that: in the instance when a card is much smaller than the pocket size, these sheets offer an unattractive display, and in the instance when the card is even just slightly larger than the pockets, the sheets become entirely useless.

Such card display sheets, moreover, are generally entirely unsuited to displaying other collectibles, such as photographs, since conventional sizing of trading cards and, for instance, photographs, is different.

The primary alternate option for displaying cards and photographs, is the traditional push-pin/thumbtack & cork bulletin-board method. Yet another display alternative is the traditional affixing of tape or supposedly “removable” poster tack/gum to the card or photograph which subsequently gets applied directly onto a wall. Most collectors find these methods to be bad for both the wall and/or for the display items themselves. Magnets are also

relied upon to hold display items, but their use is almost exclusively confined to refrigerators or magnetically-painted walls. Magnets have the disadvantage that they cover a portion of the image in an unsightly manner. The same is true for another method which has gained slightly in popularity during the past decade—but only slightly—that being a rigid-backed board in
5 conjunction with criss-crossing ribbons into which, typically, photographs are displayed. The disadvantages of covering a portion of the display item is significant since important information may be obscured.

None of the prior art recognizes the need to solve the problem of displaying multiple items, potentially items of differing sizes, and particularly, of displaying multiple items in a
10 manner that does not significantly limit the number of display items; none of the prior art discloses integrally molding an increased slope to increase tension useful towards increasing the holding pressure exerted on display item(s); none of the prior art discloses the advantage of having a transparent upper plate to provide an unobscured view of the display item(s); obviously, the application of prior art towards multi-item displays has never been conceived of
15 prior to the object of this invention, otherwise its commercial success already would have been established.

In U.S. Patent 6,018,849 to ROYER, an improved device for grasping and holding together a group of papers is disclosed which is specifically designed for holding together a group of papers in the manner of a traditional paper clip. This clip offers on one sole section
20 for grasping papers. Moreover, one of the objects indicates that Royer was only addressing his device towards groups of papers and the need to have the edges of the papers aligned flush to each other, on top of another. An object of the subject invention states that it is to provide an improved device for grasping together otherwise loose papers in a manner so that the sides and

top of edges of paper members are substantially aligned and even with one another. Royer does not justify the reasoning behind which such an effect is desirable, but it may be inferred that the application of the object of this invention was not for display. The reason for this inference is that most often papers grouped together are for storage, which only makes sense
5 since any papers following the top sheet are not usually visible.

U.S. Patent Number 5, 179,765 to SUNGBERG discloses the concept of a paper clip as a key ring item. Considering that few people typically walk around holding their keys with papers dangling for their key ring, and further, considering that even one or two keys would be too heavy for the pressure of the clip to maintain its contact with papers to which the keys and
10 clip would be attached, this invention seems particularly impractical. As a per-clipping item separate and apart from its use in coordination with a key-ring concept, this clip notion is entirely obvious to one skilled in the art.

U.S. Patent Number 5,544,436 to LEFKOWITZ discloses an apparatus for simultaneously displaying a plurality of photographs, pictures, cards, and the like. However, as
15 is typical of prior art in this field, the number of display panels are fixed in a relatively expensive frame.

U.S. Patent Number 6,490,818 to BRAMHALL discloses a frame having moveably sliding "carriers" which slide within a framework. The number of display panels, in this prior art invention are fixed in a relatively expensive frame.

20 There is a need for an inexpensively produced device which can display items including, but not limited to, trading cards, playing cards or photographs, electronic viewscreens, or most any other type of relatively thin item to be displayed in an attractive manner; one which can accommodate virtually any size display item, and that can hold a potentially limitless number of

display items without damaging the items in ways ~~the~~ that push pins/thumb tacks and tape do, and also which will not obscure the item being held. In addition, there is a need for a device/system which requires only basic instructions in order for it to be easily used.

These and other objects and advantages of the invention will become more apparent
5 from the following detailed description and claims.

SUMMARY AND OBJECTS OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is a device/system which provides for the easy and inexpensive
10 displaying of items such as, but not limited to, artwork, trading cards, photographs and electronic viewscreens. An object of this invention is to provide a device/system which is/are simple and inexpensive to manufacture.

Another object of this invention is to provide a simple-to-use device/system requiring little training to use, yet which still affords a uniform, professional display appearance,
15 paramount among which is the characteristic that the display items are aligned to one another by means of an alignment guide.

Yet another object of the present invention is to provide a device/display system which permits substantially the entire image of the item(s) being displayed to be seen. One means of achieving this result is through the use of a transparent holding element which affords an
20 unobscured view of the display item being held.

Yet still another, further object of this invention is to provide for the potentially unlimited number of display items to be interconnected.

A still further, additional object of this invention is to provide a display device which can be “set-up” and taken down relatively easily and quickly and which may be easily transported.

A yet still further object of this invention is to provide a display system which can be
5 relatively easily secured to a wall or other such display area without damage to item or wall.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

- 10 FIG. 1 is a view of a rectangular embodiment with four “gripping” areas and center tack hole;
FIG. 2 is a view of a circular embodiment with four “gripping” areas and center tack hole, and
insertable grip-enhancing aid having broken lines to indicate that it is slipped inside;;
FIG. 3 is a detailed view of a rectangular embodiment showing two separated plates, four
“gripping” areas, and a center tack hole;
- 15 FIG. 4 is a side view indicating how the preferred embodiment of the invention of this disclosure
employs two “plates” which are centrally connected, with the anterior plate angled and
having rounded edges providing for the easy insertion between it for a display item.
FIG. 5 is an overview frontal view of how an embodiment of this invention may be used;
FIG. 6 is a view indicating how an essentially flat display item can be gripped;
- 20 FIG. 7 is a separated view of two pieces which fit together using a helix formation and
which become closer together through a rotational tightening process;
FIG. 8 are views of how a display item may be inserted and held in place in a manner
in which the card may be visible through transparent material holding it;
FIG. 9 discloses a device with four interior spaces to accommodate card insertions which
25 tapers-off at the center making the fit tighter, thereby enhancing the grip action;

FIG. 10 discloses a device with four interior spaces to accommodate the insertion of display items and a tack hole having smooth, perpendicular interior sides to guide display item insertions;

FIG. 11 is a side view of another embodiment disclosing flanking display items being held;

5 FIG. 12 is a view of another embodiment shown holding a display item;

FIG. 13 is a view shown without a display item being held;

~~FIG. 14 is a view of an embodiment without separating guide “walls”;~~

NFIG. 14 is an underneath view of the back of an embodiment without a tack hole;

NFIG. 15 is a side view of an embodiment’s “pressure arm” alone;

10 NFIG. 16 is a side view of an embodiment’s “pressure arm” as it contacts the holder portion;

NFIG. 17 is a fuller side view of an embodiment;

NFIG. 18 discloses two top views of embodiments having “re-positionably sticky” areas

and shows two different options for removable “sheeting”, and each has a

primarily anterior “plate” with only a minor “front” plate which forms a “shelf”

15 for holding display items and keeping them aligned;

NFIG. 19 discloses two top views of embodiments having “re-positionably sticky” areas

with the removable “sheeting” removed.

NFIG. 20 is a top view showing the process of how display items are precisely aligned

to each other using the device of this invention;

20 NFIG. 21 a top view of display items held by the device of this invention;

NFIG. 22 is an anterior view of single or double-sided sticky area(s) to affix to a wall;

NFIG. 23 is an anterior view of single or double-sided sticky area(s) in contact with display items

and disclosing a magnet for affixing to a metallic painted or metallic wall or refrigerator;

NFIG. 24 is a top view of a spring-loaded embodiment;

NFIG. 25 is a side view of a spring-loaded embodiment open and being loaded;

NFIG. 26 is a side view of a spring-loaded embodiment being loaded an closing;

NFIG. 27 is a side view of a spring-loaded embodiment closed, with interior spring;

5 NFIG. 28 is a side view of a spring-loaded embodiment open with interior spring and display item;

NFIG. 29 is a side view of a spring-loaded embodiment closed with interior spring and display item;

NFIG. 30 is a top view of an embodiment;

NFIG. 31 is a side view showing an embodiment that tapers;

NFIG. 32 is more of an exploded view showing an embodiment that tapers;

10 NFIG. 33 is more of an exploded view showing an embodiment that tapers;

NFIG. 34 is a side view of the embodiment of NFIG. 30;

NFIG. 35 is an anterior view of one method for holding a device together slightly

differently by string or rubberbands;

NFIG. 36 is an anterior view of another method for holding a device together

15 slightly differently by string or rubberbands;

NFIG. 37 is a frontal view of the embodiment of NFIG. 35;

NFIG. 38 is a side view of the embodiment of NFIG. 35;

~~FIG. 40 is a top view of a circular embodiment disclosing a “tipped” protrusion~~

~~——— that is located behind the back “plate” and puts pressure on display items;~~

20 ~~FIG. 41 is a top view of a square with a an integral “tipped” protrusion and tack hole;~~

~~FIG. 42 is a top view an designed embodiment with reduced elements to hold display items;~~

~~FIG. 43 is a side view disclosing how the integral protrusion is positioned before activated;~~

~~FIG. 44 is a side view of FIG. 43 activated with a display item;~~

FIG. 45 is a top view of FIG. 42 in use displaying a display item;

FIG. 46 is a top view of FIG. 40 in use displaying a display item;

NFIG. 39 is a perspective view of an anterior plate with a smooth, sloping surface which,

5 —when used in conjunction with a frontal plate offers an increased pressure placed
 —on the inserted display item introduced into the cavity which the frontal and
 —anterior plate define;

NFIG. 40 is a layered, perspective view of a “sticky faced” frontal plate with peel away cover
sheet and magnet on its reverse side and a peel-away sticky sheet on the magnet;

NFIG. 41 is a top view of a transparent frontal plate, and a textured face of an anterior plate;

10 NFIG. 42 are perspective views of a devices with texturized and smooth anterior plates with
 sloping gradations & tack holes;

NFIG. 43 is a perspective view a an-unsloping anterior plate with magnet and sticky back;

NFIG. 44 is a perspective view of the layers when in a final, assembled device;

NFIG. 45 is a perspective view of an embodiment of this invention holding card-like items;

15 NFIG. 46 is a perspective view of an embodiment of this invention holding card-like items;

NFIG. 47 is a perspective view of another embodiment of this device;

NFIG. 48 is a perspective view of another embodiment of this device;

NFIG. 49 is a perspective view of yet another embodiment permitting the joining of a front
and back plate at a hub without glue or sonic welding having no defined sections;

20 NFIG. 50 is a perspective view of the embodiment of NFIG 49 uniting the two plates at the
 center by pushing down on the protruding center of the anterior plate;

NFIG. 51 is a frontal view of two devices showing how the embodiment of NFIG 48 may
be used;

NFIG. 52 yet another embodiment means for holding flat items in which the top and/or side holders can be broken away to form a clean edge;

NFIG. 53 is a perspective view of a back plate of clamp-like clip with a tack hole;

NFIG. 54 is the embodiment of NFIG 53- without tack hole and holding a card-like display item;

~~FIG. 55 is a frontal view of the embodiment of FIG 61. with four clamp-like clips.~~

~~FIG. 57 is a perspective view of yet another embodiment having no defined sections~~

Front Plate 22	Raised Guide Edge 32
Tack Hole 24	<u>Glue Cover 34</u>
Back Plate 26	<u>Glue 36</u>
Back Plate Tack Hole 28	<u>Magnet 38</u>
Tapered Edge 30	<u>Insertable Grip-Enhancing Aid 40</u>

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

In a preferred embodiment, the front plate **22**, is formed of a transparent, entirely flat, planar sheet of a colorless plastic. This provides for a viewer to see through front plate **22** to the display item(s) which can have little, if any, of its area otherwise obscured. Back Plate **26** can be made of most any type of material, but is preferably of the same material as that of the Front Plate **22** to offer Back Plate **26** a superior bond with Front Plate **22**. A central a hole, Tack Hole **24**, is made, for instance, through an integral injection-molding process, or it may be drilled or made with a tool with an industrial steel pointed pin. Tack Hole **24** should be wide enough to easily accommodate the insertion of a traditionally sized thumbtack. Tack Hole **24** may be obviated, if so desired, in other embodiments in which, for example, the center area of the device may display a stamped/embossed/etched/imprinted corporate and/or brand logo.

If the invention of this device is to be manufactured through an injection molding process, prior to molding or extruding the device of this invention, a traditional, common, conventional plastic pelletized resin is obtained. One simple means for joining Front Plate **22** and Back Plate **26** is through the production process using sonic welding. Those skilled in the art of plastic injection molding and plastic assembly are already aware that this process, in which two separate pieces of plastic are integrally bonded wherever they touch, provides for an extremely fast, strong, and cost effective means for joining two pieces of plastic. This manner permits a relatively strong bonding of two separate pieces of plastic without the use of glue. Of course, glue may also be used as an alternative to joining two pieces of plastic.

Back Plate **26**, preferably, has Tapered Edge **30** to allow for the more easy insertion of display items. Raised Guide Edge **32** serves to create an “envelope” effect in-between the two sandwiching Front and Back Plates **22** and **26**, thereby creating a space suitable to accommodate the insertion in-between of display items. Raised Guide Edge **32**, further, serves as the joining points of between Front and Back Plates **22** and **26** in the sonic weld joining process, in that Front and Back Plates **22** and **26** only meld together along the points at which they touch, which are along the “crossed” Raised Guide Edge **32**.

In an alternate embodiment(s). Back Plate **26** may be of metal. In this instance a Glue **36** would serve as a preferred means of joining Front Plate **22** to Back Plate **26**. Furthermore, it is possible for Back Plate **26** to be used alone, produced via an injection molding process which includes having Raised Guide Edge **32** integrally molded therewithin, and having Glue **36** smeared along its surface, excluding the surface of Raised Guide Edge **32**, and subsequently covered to preserve the "sticky" property of Glue **32** until such time as use is desired through covering by Glue Cover **34**. In this manner, when use is desired. Glue Cover **34** is removed,

and a display item to be held by the device of this disclosure is subsequently affixed to the portion of Back Plate 26 covered with Glue 36 which is revealed by the removal of Glue Cover 34.

In the event that a greater tension is desired in the preferred embodiment, Insertable Grip-Enhancing Aid 40 may be inserted into the cavity formed between the joined Front Plate 22 and Back Plate 26. The introduction of Insertable Grip-Enhancing Aid 40 in conjunction with a display item increases the holding pressure of said cavity. Alternatively a texturing of either Front Plate 22 or Back Plate 26 may be accomplished in order to provide greater friction to a display item.

Either Glue 36 covered with Glue Cover 34 may be used with most any embodiment of this advice preferably located on the back surface of Back Plate 26. Moreover, Magnet 38 may also be used in such a manner in order to provide for the device of this disclosure to cling to metal such as a conventional refrigerator door.

In yet another embodiment, no tension-imparting means may be required between Back Plate 26 and a display item or items. When rubber bands or string are used to connect hook-like elements on the back surface of Back Plate 26, then display items may be held together by the sheer force of the pulling created by the tension of said rubber bands or string. The Newly Amended "Specification" presented herein recites features contained within the Original Claims and Drawings of the patent application and, therefore, the above-referenced amendments do not present any new matter.

While the preferred embodiment of the present invention has been described and illustrated, it is understood by one skilled in the art that the preferred embodiment is capable of

variation, addition, omission and modification without departing from the spirit an scope of the invention.

The newly Amended "Specification" presented herein recites features contained within the Original Claims and Drawings of the patent application and, therefore, the above-
5 referenced amendments do not present any new matter.

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